

❧ CHERRY-STONES ❧

By

Eden Phillpotts

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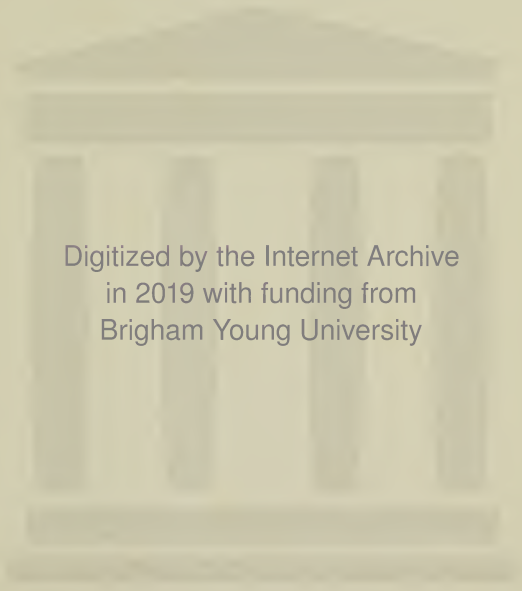
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Florence Hardy

in friendship

for
Aven Stillwater

Jan 1923



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CHERRY-STONES

PIXIES' PLOT : By the same author



Nation: "He has a vein of verse uncommonly gentle, melodious, and fanciful; a chimer of bells rather than a ringer, he perfects and he delights."

Spectator: "There is unquestionably something very attractive about Mr. Eden Phillpotts' verse . . . This poem is just clearly and obviously successful:

'The harp of night had silver strings,
The moon was low, the stars burned dim,
When from a wood, with soaring wings,
Joe flushed a brace of cherubim.'

A more attractive first verse was never framed."

Saturday Review: "But how charming."

♣ CHERRY-STONES ♣

By
EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Author of
Pixies' Plot; The Lavender Dragon
Pan and the Twins
&c.

LONDON
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UPB

CHERRY-STONES

*Pentilicus—Carrara—dazzling bright,
Glad ministrants to many a son of light,
My hand no deed august
Can carve upon your dust.*

*O happy lot and destiny sublime :
To set one marble in a niche of Time,
And passing leave some trace
To save your humble face !*

*But art hath many visions, small and great,
Whereon pure Beauty still may meditate ;
And she will not disown
A faithful cherry-stone.*

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WHY DEVON IS RED

ROSY DEVON—Devon dimpling like a red, red rose.
“What can you mean, that I shall be Queen ?”
She asks, and the wonder grows ;
While from far Land’s End to John o’ Groats—
From north and south and east and west—
Great England votes,
And her far flung voices attest,
“That is what we mean : Devon shall be Queen !”

Rosy Devon—Devon blushing like a red, red rose
Under the honour bestowed upon her ;
From the Channel Sea to the Severn Sea,
Burning in glory and mystery ;
While the Island cries—
Through east and west and north and south—
With one organ mouth,
“By your granite crown and your robe of grey,
By your silver rivers and valleys old,
By your songs of might on a bygone day,
By your glorious dead from the Age of Gold,
That is what we mean : Devon shall be Queen !”

THE OLD MILL

I KNOW a ruin on a hill,
Where once there roared a great wind-mill,
That spread its pinions every morn,
To grind the valley people's corn—
In years long sped away ere you and I were born.

Now, only stands a hollow cone
In waving wheat and all alone
Uplifted, but its empty core
With names of lovers scribbled o'er ;
For men and maids still come each other to adore.

Wind frets the weeds that dance aloft,
And round about that upland croft,
As round a rock the billow flows,
Corn rustles to the ruin and glows,
While close-joined names within the sun, or moonlight
shows.

CIDER MAKERS

WHEN drifts the apple-breath, to steal again
Through fruit-crowned orchards, like a fragrant
 wave,
And when on stilly nights
The falling fruit we hear ;

Then creak the rusty hinges, gape the doors
Of cider presses, slumbering and dim ;
And cobwebs tatter down
To shrivel in the light.

Through many a dusty vault the autumn sun
Launches a ruby shaft at eventide,
Determining shadowy shapes
Within the velvet gloom.

The presses heave, like cavern idols set
Above the granite trough around their knees,
And seem to wake again
And stretch their giant limbs ;

For tide of life is running ; feet of men
Trample the orchard herbage, stamp a stain
That winds away and fades
Among the mossy boles.

Beneath the bough another harvest lies
In mounds and pools of light and scattered stars,
That gleam within the heart
Of every apple glade,

Shining behind the shadows, twinkling out
Where sunlight strokes the grass to emerald,
Or where, in garnered heap,
The crimson apples flame.

Old ministrants of cider mysteries
Blend sweet and sour on immemorial plan,
And wrap the sacrifice
In woven horse-hair grey ;

And when the presses turn and grip and crush,
In rivulets the virgin ciders flow,
While sunbeams twine thereon
A braid of trickling fire.

There is a hum and bustle through the vault ;
Great hairy arms knot up and heavy hands
Tug at the beams of oak
Upon their shining screws ;

While round each door the feathered people run—
White, spangled, bronze, and coral-red of comb—
Who from the pomace peck
A feast of nut-brown seeds.

Ripples the cider with a little sound,
Like the least purring rill that runs to catch
Within her silver bow
The blue forget-me-nots.

Ripples the cider when the vat is drawn,
Translucently, as though crushed opal stones
Were melted ; then away
The racking to endure.

The ancient men who labour at the mill
Have drunk from more than fifty cider brews,
Straining the massy beams
For half a century.

Where rays of light resolve the polished wood
A fret of carving still their timbers show,
And, graved upon the grain,
Are names of heroes fallen.

For many a vanished, mighty-shouldered man,
Who drove the press at bygone vintages,
The oak shall feel no more,
Yet still his life records ;

And though no stone declares their sleeping-place
Under the darnel, yet the quick may read
How their old knives have set
A last memorial here.

Day upon day the curdled cider spurts,
The timbers grind and grunt, and through the murk
The towering screws throw down
Their cold and steely shine.

Then, flowing on and racked and racked again,
The cloudy liquors sparkle amber bright,
Till fore-glow of the dawn
Is not more crystal clear.

The rites are ended ; barrels seem to bulge ;
Wet vats grow dry and weary beams are still,
Their chronicles enriched
With new recorded names.

Once more the doors are fast put home again
And quiet comes, to tempt with solitude
Quick, peaceful, flickering things
That fear the voice of man.

The presses slumber and their fragrance fades ;
The shadowy mouse steals back into his haunt ;
An empty knot-hole throws
The only ray of light,

When, red of eye on low November eves,
The sun peeps through the naked apple-boughs,
To flash a fleeting glance
That's lost in nothingness.

Patient Arachne, hanging on her thread,
One moment twinkles, like a bead of gold ;
Then only fitful sounds
Whisper upon the dark.

MARCH

THERE is gold for the whin,
There is snow for the thorn,
And cuckoo is calling again.
The brown linnets begin,
The lark's in the morn,
The ice has gone out of the rain.

There's a whisper of green
Through the russet and sere,
And bud-break and blooth on the bough.
In each dingle and dene
The blue-bells are near,
And primrosen opening now.

The lamb's on his legs
Meadow daisies among
At play with his small, shaky brothers.
There are nests for the eggs,
Cubbyholes for the young,
And care for the eyes of the mothers.

THE GARDEN

(TO B.V.J.)

A LONG a northern slum he went
With grating voice and discontent,
For seedling flowers none felt need :
The noisy coster found poor speed.
Like a green smile his seedlings lay
In that drab street of black and grey.
Then came a child, whose greedy eyes
Gloated upon the merchandise ;
As though they had been fruit or bread,
Among the plants his spirit fed,
A passer-by, at hap of chance,
Noted the youngster's greedy glance.
" What would you do with flowers, lad,
As though a garden patch you had ?
Pots in a window-ledge on high
Are all the garden you can spy,
Or half a soap-box on a roof —— ? "
" I got a garden : it's God's troof ! "
He scowled, but hoped ; his eyes were bold.
" A pansy, or a marigold—
Mister, a brown would do the job ! "
" Then tell me where and take a bob."
He grinned and reddened—doubt and joy
Puckered the face of that small boy.
" Lordy ! But you ain't half a chap.
I ain't a kidding—not a scrap—
I got a garden all serene :
My muvver's grave at Kensal Green."

SEA SUNSET

FROM the place of the sun to the sea,
From the sea to the curve of the land,
All unfettered and flaming and free
Both the glow and the glory expand,
Till they throb in wild pulses of fire
Through the wave and the golden-ribbed sand.

Where the heart of each billow runs dark
To the ridge of the down-falling dome,
Flash an emerald flame and a spark
Through the last little curl of the comb,
And deep chamfered with furrows of gold
Are the floors of the on-racing foam.

Heaven flows in a fierce phlegethon
With the far-flashing wave for a brim,
And adown that red gold, one by one,
Sail the cirri, all purple and dim,
As it had been great feathers new fallen
From the wings of the swift seraphim.

FELINE ANYWAY

“ LIFE’s a cat with nine sharp tails : ”
Loud laments the man who fails.
“ Life’s a cat with nine good lives,”
Answers him the man who thrives.
Good or ill their fate may be,
Life’s a cat they both agree ;
Let what fortune haunt the house,
Life’s a cat and man’s a mouse.

DIAGNOSIS

ONE versed to judge of faces by my trade,
I summed the traveller up, appraised and weighed:
A mean, hard soul and predatory made.

He had a miser's mouth and narrow eyes ;
He peered to right and left for some new prize ;
" Raptorial," I thought, " as any hawk that flies ! "

Holding a faded bloom from cottage close,
A tiny girl ran out beneath his nose
And shrilled, " Please master, buy my purty rose."

Roused from his thoughts, the man stared at the child,
Then, with a countenance exceeding mild,
He gave the baby sixpence, and he smiled.

THE TOWN CLERKS

THE old Town Clerk fell ill, took to his bed and died ;
The city fathers thronged and mourned at his
grave side ;

The Mayor, with broken voice, made speech above the
dead.

“ A quite irreparable loss,” is what his worship said.

The new Town Clerk ere long found thought to marriage
turn ;

The city fathers gave a silver-plated urn ;

The Mayor presented it, two days before they wed.

“ The best Town Clerk we’ve ever had,” is what his
worship said.

THE BAT

WHEN creatures of the hoof and pad
Fought claws and beaks for mastery,
Then all the beasts and birds went mad
Save one, who said, " I'll wait and see."

He thought to hail the winning side
And loud declare himself their friend ;
Yet, after strife had spent its tide,
No victors triumphed in the end.

Each other's wounds they licked, and swore,
Since neither beast nor bird had won,
Never to quarrel any more.
But all agreed the bat to shun.

Now, banned from day, forbidden night,
That friendless, little, prick-eared fool,
Down the dim dusk of dying light
Squeaks through the lonely crepuscule.

WEDDED

AN amber-breasted thrush upon a thorn
Made glad the wind-swept lea
With mellow melody,
To hearten buds and stars and little leaves newborn.

He sang and loved and sang, that throstle blest,
Till, from the ivy-tod,
His wife cried, "Oh, my God,
Do stop your noise and help with this here dratted nest !"

CARVING A NETSUKE

HE counts not time nor thinks to say
The working hours are done ;
He studies not the sun
To know if he shall put away
The ivory, or bone, or jade and go to play.

His work and play's the mouse, or mask,
Or flow'r he strives to make
For its own perfect sake.
He troubles not, nor stops to ask
What of his life shall go to filling of the task.

The masterpiece that fires his thought—
Perfection in its kind—
Absorbs that Nippon mind.
A year's not long : a week's not short
If worthy of his dream the splinter shall be wrought.

EVICTIION

I

A LEPROUS roof of rolling tar and turf and broken slate ;
A bulging wall that's like to fall ; a hovel desolate,
Stuck on the edge of heath and sedge beside a blind-eyed
bog ;
A little crowd and voices loud uplifted in the fog.

II

A cart with crocks and chairs and beds ; a crate of cackling
geese ;
A crippled lad, a woman mad and cursing the police ;
A piebald cat, a crying brat, two ragged men who fight ;
Then trailing mists the agonists have swallowed from my
sight.

THE EAGLE FERN

WHEN grey-eyed Spring on feet of cheer
Leaps from the valley to the heath,
She feels the touch and moves beneath,
Till silver fingers through the sere
Twinkle once more and April rain
Summons the eagle fern again.

Now Summer floods her maiden grace
With the noon sun ; through hill and dale
Her scented splendours weave a veil ;
The hot air throbs upon her face ;
And o'er the steadfast green, a hue
Descends from heaven's eternal blue.

Then Autumn, with enchanted wand,
Rains gold upon the eagle fern,
Until her far-flung legions burn
Like fire in every plume and frond.
At even time she paints with light
A wonder on the edge of night.

Winter bids all her glories go :
In russet ruin they sink down
And to a rain-soaked purple drown,
Or vanish in the driven snow ;
While snug she sleeps, for she hath spread
Her coverlet upon her bed.

THE RUIN

HERE dwelt the warrener—a mind
Unskilled to neighbour with its kind—
Till love his solitary life
Awakened ; a young maid for wife
There came, in trust and hope to bless
That far, sequestered loneliness.

Years passed ; her rosy visions died,
While on the desert, side by side,
Her silent, moody spouse and she
Dwelt in that huge monotony,
Until her heart began to quail,
Her starven spirit slowly fail.

Where rushes now the hearthstone hide
I often sat at eventide
And listened, while the trapper told
Of slaughter on the fell and wold.
I praised the bread his woman baked,
But knew not that her young heart ached.

Had children to the pair been born,
Love's delicate pattern might have worn ;
But life brought nothing ; in her prime
She drowned upon the tide of time.
Another year she fought and bled ;
Then, in an autumn twilight, fled.

The warrener hid up his mind
And swiftly vanished down the wind,
Seeking another desert lone
Where sorrows past should not be known.
Unto a foreign land went he—
A farther West beyond the sea.

The roof is down, a standing wall
Waits one more winter storm to fall ;
But yesterday this was a home :
The heath not hides old tin and cloam,
That rust and stare with blinded eye
Upon the shattered sanctity.

For earth is ever sanctified
Where love hath dwelt, where love hath died.
To love's bright cradle still we turn
But spare few garlands for his urn,
Denying the mortality
That links love to our brittle clay.

MY CHERRY TREE

I CARVED a cherry-stone with care
The precious hidden life to spare,
Then planted it and saw it spring—
A living, growing, hopeful thing.

When I am quit of destiny,
Friend, pray you seek my cherry tree,
Eat of the blood-red fruit and trace
My art upon each stone's round face

TOM AND HIS GRANDFATHER

WHEN young Tom bellows loud and fast,
His crude and stark and garish view,
Be not dismayed or stand aghast ;
Remember Tom is twenty-two.
The fruits we best enjoy to eat
Are always sour before they're sweet.

And when Tom's grand-dad mumbles out
His prehistoric, musty lore,
Such withered values do not flout :
The ancient man is ninety-four.
Dead fruits, now dry and shrunk away,
Lacked not for savour in their day

TRIADS

I

THE lights of even flow on high—
Lilac and fading rose and gold—
That drift from east into the west
For day is growing old.

Still the thrush sings, the blackbirds cry,
And young lambs scamper through the fold,
Nor seek the mother's side to rest,
Nor feel the breeze bite cold.

Wide waves of darkness dim the sky ;
Day leaves the woodland and the wold ;
Eyes shut in holt and feathered nest ;
The curfew's knell is knolled.

II

At dark a haggard lad and worn
Homed faltering to his house-place.
Long had he been a curse and bane—
A byeword, mean and base.

He bent to suffer fiery scorn ;
He steeled his fickle heart to trace
In each sad eye the shame and pain
And grief of such disgrace.

Yet she that worthless one had borne
Into a proud and olden race,
Saw but her firstling child again
And ran and kissed his face.

III

Stars in the morning pallor fade ;
The false dawn burns the heel of night
And spills red fire into the dale
To make the grey dew bright—

Flushing the shallows in the glade
Where singing waters, flashing white,
Foam on their granite stairs and veil
Each rock with rainbow light.

The lark's aloft : a sweet aubade
Thrills the blue crystal of the height ;
And, higher yet, the cirri hail
True dawn in all his might.

STORM WIND

OVER a sanguine bud-break, newly come
On thickening finials, in hope to find
Its vernal home, there raves a cruel wind.

Many the jewelled spike of ash and oak,
That welcomed joy of life with infant trust,
Lie torn and broke in the hail-beaten dust.

Their patient winter toil within the shard ;
The predetermined loveliness, the thought—
You think it hard that all should be unwrought ?

Blind in his might and in his measure blind,
Running where never writ of reason weighs,
The Spring-mad wind no human law obeys.

But what are we of reason's rule to prate,
Whose budded dreams go strangled by the breath
Of greed and hate, blasting our souls to death ?

But what are we to mourn the leaves with ruth,
Who trample honour, justice in the mud,
Kneel to untruth and waste our brothers' blood ?

THE MOUSE AND THE OWL

A MOUSE beneath the brown owl's claw
Begged for her freedom, arguing
The bird was wrong to take her life.
"Six children in my nest I leave—
Six handsome dinners for your grace,
When presently—round, juicy, plump—
They come into their toothsome prime.
But, if you eat me, they will die,
And thus for six you get but one—
A proposition most unsound."
So spake the mouse, and the wise bird
Lifted his claw and let her go.
"Bring them to me when they have reached
Perfection, one by one," he said,
"And tend them carefully and well,
Or you shall hear from me again."
But at the entrance of her hole
Under a moonlit hawthorn tree,
The mouse delayed and showed her teeth
And squeaked with joy and answered him.
"Thou heartless, greedy fool!" cried she,
"Know that I am a maiden mouse
Of spotless virtue unassailed.
I have no family at all,
And live in chaste seclusion here
With an old mother, whom I tend.

Henceforth remember, round-eyed dolt,
A mouse in claw is better far
Than half a dozen in the nest ! ”
She whisked her tail and went to bed,
While Billy Owl laughed loud and long
To find himself outwitted quite
By such a shrewd and spinster mouse.
But when his Jenny Owl he met
He kept the story to himself.

THE FAIR

THE fair is a fight ; some are fighting for gain ;
Some fighting for pleasure and some to cheat pain ;
But that squinting old hag, with a voice like a knife
And a tray of wire spiders—she's fighting for life.

THE LAST RUN

BACK to his vixen and his young
A dog-fox staggered, spent and beat,
Crawling the black-eyed brats among,
With draggled flanks and hanging tongue,
Foul brush and bleeding feet.

He panted till his throbbing breast
Grew still, then told his anxious wife
And prick-eared cubs—four of the best—
How near he'd been to going West
And what had saved his life.

“The pack was quickening for the kill
And I all in, a beaten wreck,
When the red rascal they call ‘Bill’
Fell with his horse on Stoney Hill
And broke his blessed neck.

Because they found their huntsman dead,
Hounds were whipped off and sporting done.
’Twas man, not fox, had that last run !”
The vixen licked his nose and said,
“Ill wind blows good to none.”

THE SAND GLASS

WE'VE drifted on the face sublime
Of Ethiop deserts since the prime,
And laughed at space and flouted time.

We've felt a royal Pharoah's shoon ;
We've flown upon the black simoon
To hide the fiery sun at noon.

Grains of red Afric dust are we,
And our mysterious destiny :
To time the egg Jane boils for tea.

YOUNG SPRING

WHEN Dame Demeter's starry shoon
Pass o'er the weald and wold again,
Quickened to being by her boon
Of steely sunshine and warm rain,
Young Spring awakens, shy and wild,
For Spring is savage Winter's child.

But ere the dancing daffodils
Have sparkled through the sere of March,
And a green whisper on the hills
Foretold the rapture of the larch,
She wears a shadow in her eyes
And groweth pitiful and wise.

The weakness of the newborn world
Doth smite her maiden bosom through :
The leaves that cannot come unfurled,
The tiny bleat beside the ewe,
The windworn blossom seeking rest,
The chick, egg-bound, in many a nest.

And being tuned to gentleness
Earth brings the children to her knee
That Spring may shield and guard and bless
The beauty of their infancy,
And turn her own young heart to ruth—
A spirit ever rare in youth.

THE WIFE

WE murmured of his kindliness
When by his pit a hundred stood ;
We held him loyal, generous, good,
And only spoke his name to bless.

But when three years and more were sped
I came again beside his grave,
And found red dock and darnel wave
Above the unrecorded dead.

His widow listened to my plea,
Then made reply in smouldering tone ;
“ My master froze my heart to stone :
That’s all the stone he’ll get from me.”

BALANCE

O you who build the people's toys
Of poetry, picture, music, stone,
Who, blind to all our little joys,
Greet life's wide vision with a groan,
Know this : Truth is not hid in darkling shapes alone.

The wide earth reeks of hideousness
To scorch our hearts and make us rue,
Tuning our art to bitter stress ;
Yet much that justice counts as true
Is still most beautiful, and clean and shining too.

Our heaven is dark with evil clouds
To challenge grief and passionate woe,
But there are other shards than shrouds
Wherein reality must go :
Skies break upon the blue and distant rainbows glow

Through light and shadow winds the way
With sunlit space for sanguine youth ;
Not all is hopelessness, decay,
For laughter goes with quick-eyed ruth
Where we would haply find the many-sided truth.

TO CHLOE

AFTER HORACE. ODE XXIII.

CHLOE, you fly me like a frightened fawn
That seeks her mother on the mountain-side
And trembles at the lispings, lucent lawn
Of forest leaves, or when her amber hide
Is stroken by the wind. Nay, even spring's
Soft budding laughter some new terror brings,
And when the lizard rustles through the brake
Her little knees and little heart both shake.
But, Chloe, who doth hurt or hinder you ?
No tiger, no Gaetolian lion I,
To tear your tenderness, but lover true,
Compact of worship and humility.
You're wife-old, sweetheart ! Prithee understand,
And stray a scantling from your mother's hand.

SINGER UNKNOWN

STILL shall his elemental song
Endure, in perfect loveliness,
Wherever men and women throng,
New hearts to lift, new souls to bless.

Him reverence we never can :
His tale was told to vanished times—
His gain and loss and scope and span
Forgot, save these unfading rhymes.

Oh, happy poet, never grieve
We lift no stone, no name recall ;
Yours but to sing and cease, and leave
The wild bird's legacy for all.

THAT SHE MAY BE COMFORTED

MY soul's small voice hath told me ;
Pure hope and faith uphold me
That we cannot part,
Oh, dearest heart,
Though shepherd Death shall fold me.

The noontide sun is shining
To mock at your repining,
For a lover's shroud
Is but a cloud—
A cloud with a silver lining.

The breath of fire can never
Our dual spirits sever,
But an after-glow
My soul shall know
Till you return for ever.

No sorrow then, no sighing,
No murmuring, no crying.
While you shall endure
Be very sure
My passing is not dying.

Commingle we ascended,
Through life's high heaven wended ;
And one cannot sink
Beneath time's brink
Ere the other's way be ended.

Twin stars to sister, brother ;
To father and to mother ;
To the world one gleam
On the starry stream ;
But glorious suns to each other.

Still shall be feeling, knowing,
Still worshipping, still showing
My heart for a light
Above the night
To guide your lonely going

Oh, woman, though none heed it,
And life no longer speed it,
Like a flame shall burn,
Through earth and urn,
My love while you may need it.

Under wild winds and weather
Beneath the loneliest heather
I'll wait till you creep
To share my sleep
And we surcease together.

VICARIATE

THE lark who ascends with a song
And returns with another—
He is my brother.
Though wounded on earth I must lie,
The lark in the sky
In his youth and his glee
Is flying and singing and living for me.

The blackthorn with ivory bloom—
No year have I missed her—
She is my sister.
Though I may not blossom again,
Blackthorn, in the rain
On a wind-bitten lea,
Is shining and flashing and living for me.

OCTOPUS

THE octopus, with awful eyes
And ashy charms,
Wave their grey, shuddering, all-compelling arms,
Open their steely beaks ; and when they rise,
Their warty branches writhe upon the foam
Above their home,
Till hardy men growl out a loathing cry
Before such hideous inhumanity.

Perchance in Jupiter there move
Through some dim hell
Of twilight waters, twisting shapes that dwell
Contented there ; who live and work and love,
Knowing no other world, conceiving not
A better lot ;
Where octopus, self-conscious, patient, brave,
Believes in God and life beyond the grave.

EXPERIENCE

WHEN I was young I strove to glean
What fellow men and women mean,
And challenged eye of passer-by,
If peradventure I might know
The secrets of the heart below.

Now I am old, I only care
How fellow men and women fare,
Nor challenge eye of passer-by.
Because in truth I mostly know
The secrets of the heart below.

HEART AND BRAIN

NIGHT-FOUNDERED Heart had lost her ways
Amid long strivings of good-will,
Noble endeavours come to nil,
And heaven-high futilities
Pursued in faith, with passion strong
To slay the evil, right the wrong.
Now wan and weary, faint and spent,
For some new guiding star she gropes—
To light another vision, blent
Of tenderness and patient hopes.

And Brain, grown bitter with the blows
He'd beat upon the vile and base,
Staggered before the iron face
Of huge, unconquered human woes.
He smote and smote and could not see
What lacked his mighty energy,
But marked each stroke deflected sheer
From armèd ignorance and greed
That scorned his challenges austere,
Flouted the clarion of his creed.

Oh generous Heart, oh Brain steel-bright,
Fore-gather, come together, rise,
And dawn shall break upon the night
Of your divided destinies,

To rouse the weary soul of earth
Sunk in long impotence and dearth.
When Reason mounts her empty throne—
For orb and sceptre Heart and Brain—
Mankind shall come into his own
And human Love with Wisdom reign.

THE WASP

A SEVERED wasp yet drank the juice
Of a ripe pear upon a plate,
And one did idly meditate
What was the use.

Yet round about us, spent and done,
With hands already growing cold,
We see half-men still scraping gold,
Its uses gone.

ANDREA D'AGNOLO (DEL SARTO)

How often did his soul ache as he painted ?
How often fainted
His erring spirit, while the immortal gift
Of his right hand cut wider the deep rift
Between him and his art ?
How often did his palette light a higher
And purer fire
Within him ? Much he suffered, so they say,
Because a worthless clod of woman's clay
Burdened his foolish heart.

He made her dust immortal ; never man
Since world began
Paid better for the privilege she gave
Of share in her ; but did the baggage save
Him from his faulty self ?
While he translated her into the sky,
Madonna high :
All that she did was drag him down, down, down,
To coin his fame and sully his renown
And smirch his soul for pelf.

Uxorious master ! that could let a wife
Tarnish your life
And with her greedy, harlot view of things
Betray your genius, soil you, clip your wings

To line her dirty nest.
Some other she had helped to lift your soul
Nearer the goal—
To raise your spirit and environ it
With womanhood a little better fit
To guard your precious best.

Vain, vain to think so ! Pitifully vain
This futile strain.
Our fires burn dull or splendid as they can
No woman's taper shall eclipse in man
His own, his proper light.
That stuff we're filled with makes or mars the game,
Decides the flame.
The mingled oil that rare d'Agnolo fills
Came from the presses of ancestral mills
To burn now dim, now bright.

Andrea was Andrea ; higher than his soul
Shall wave the scroll
That rates his place supreme ; and if a fool—
If his days show a sort of crepuscule
Between their dawns of glory—
What strange, unparalleled concern is that
To babble at ?
Clotho a phoenix sense of colour, form,
Twined up and wove with feeble human norm ;
And hence the master's story.

We gather fig from thistle, grape from thorn
Where art is born ;
Then suck your grapes with joy, and leave the
stones,
Nor utter sanctimonious, silly, groans
Because a seed is sour ;
Let clocks of men, that only keep good time,
Make their own rhyme
And tick perfection from the mantelpiece
Of each mean spirit ; still art's ancient lease
Is shortened not an hour.

THE MAIDEN VENUS

(AFTER LEONIDAS OF TARENTUM)

APELLES saw her through the ocean foam
Lift into life and like a lily bloom
On her sea-mother's breast ;
He saw her little, sun-bright fingers comb
And squeeze her hair, all pearly with the spume
Of the last billow's crest.

She treads the tingling sands of ancient earth
And feels the passion of the sunshine meet
The passion of her eyes.
Desire and warmth and wonder, joy and mirth
Hasten the twinkle of her flashing feet :
Into the world she flies.

As from the sheath an odonata breaks,
And smoothes the crumple of his glassy wings
Before he darts above,
So now the fragrant air of heaven she takes,
While her sweet breasts bud rosy as she sings
Epiphanies of Love.

LAMENT

'Tis here they say the journey ends
And little doubt it must be so ;
But, as I tell my bestest friends,
I hate to go.

For eighty year I've went and come
'Long with the lowliest of the low ;
Yet, though the work-house be my home,
I hate to go.

'Twas good to sit and turn the news
And hear of others' weal or woe ;
Even from the sick-ward's window views
I hate to go.

A parlous thought, the silent throng
Who'll greet my bones in Beggars' Row.
Bound up along, or down along,
I hate to go.

THE REVENGE

“ **H**ERE will I die, and she shall know,
For when unto the tryst they come,
My pendant dust must turn them dumb,
And still the throb and quench the glow,
Striking the last, the fatal blow
In that accursed heart below.

“ Quick shall be dead ; while dead shall cry
Aloud the wanton woman’s crime,
And freeze her fickle blood, what time
She lifts aloft a faithless eye,
To see stark vengeance hanging high,
And spirit-haunting destiny ! ”

Under the Lover’s Oak, the wight
Leapt into nothingness and swayed
On his death bough, while through a glade,
Where the great tree shone silver bright
Upon a still and moony night,
Came twain, to take their love’s delight.

Close clipped upon the moss they sprawl,
Throbbing and burning each for each,
With pulse of fire their only speech.
They do not feel the white dew fall ;
Nor hear the fledgling owlets call ;
Nor see the hanging dead at all !

AT ZERMATT

COLD-HEARTED mist ! Not only on the mountain
Did your wan shadows sweep to dull the snows
And muffle up each lonely, singing fountain
And chill the red bud of the alpen rose ;
Not only where the dayspring leapt so free
To flash upon the glacier's dim, green eyes—
Not only for the mountains, but for me
You limn again ; your cold forefinger lies
Like ice upon my spirit. Sorrows old
That the fair, red-winged morning sent with night
To roam awhile, creep back into the fold
Of my sad bosom, till the brief delight
Of dawn upon the lifted snow is stilled
And I am worse for having known it. See,
Grey hawk of sorrow ! Thou hast struck and killed
A new-born joy and slain a wakened glee.
Oh, cruel shade, born of our common mother,
Thou art the very symbol of my grief—
Ever in wait to speed and swoop and smother
Return of fearful peace—yea, like a thief,
Filching and filching from one beggared heart
The little that it has. No anodyne
Shall play a merciful Nepenthe's part
To drown this everlasting scourge of mine.
Let but a dream fling ghostly joy to me,
And bid me wake to cry, " It shall be true ! "
Above the hills of hope I only see
Thy haggard spectres stealing down the blue.

SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE

THEY dwelt together, mate and mate,
And she was shrewd and game,
But he a wight of little weight,
Hard working, mild and tame.

She took him as he was ; she went,
Indifferent to his shade,
Her steadfast way, not discontent—
He did as he was bade.

Affection none had she, nor fear
To heat, or chill, or rouse ;
But peace, more precious year by year
Beside her twilight spouse.

Yet, when the ancient came to die,
No longer faint and dim,
She loved his placid memory,
Though she had not loved him.

TWO FUNERALS

WHEN we buried old Bill at the church far away :
'Cause he wanted to rise with his wife, the Last Day,
Our hearse, going fast on the moor in the rain,
Ran over a rabbit—the creature was slain.
Old Bill had a funeral worth all the money :
Two carrion crows cawed the service for bunny.

ELPENICE

ELPENICE was her name—
Swarthy maid in crocus gown.
Half a girl and half a flame,
Flickering, trembling up and down,
Elpenice, Elpenice
Danced her way through Cyrus Town.

Coming then before the King
He gave up his heart to her ;
Told the myrmidons to bring
Gold and frankincense and myrrh.
Elpenice, Elpenice
Presently began to purr.

When the monarch willed to give
Pleasure house of ivory,
Where her ladyship should live
Dancing only for his eye,
Elpenice, Elpenice
Much admired his majesty.

But when to her twinkling feet
The infatuate King bent down,
And with passion indiscreet
Kissed each little toe so brown,
Elpenice, Elpenice
Danced away from Cyrus Town

YELLOW-HAMMER

A GOLDEN bird upon a golden thorn
Made music most forlorn.
Hid in a waste of whins and granite grey,
With melancholy lay,
He met the unfolding morn.

And yet his little, long drawn, lonely cry,
Tinkling so mournfully,
Better than nobler melody, I ween,
Chimed with that spacious scene
Of heath and sad-coloured sky.

A LOVE SONG

THE snow hath knit a shroud
For perished hill and dale ;
Wild Winter shouts aloud,
And hungry spirits quail.
Grey icicles beard on the bough
Of every naked tree ;
Yet, Anthea, glorious Anthea,
The Spring is here for me !

Stormy the night and fierce,
And dark as any tomb,
Without one ray to pierce,
The terror of the gloom.
I faint, I fail, I lift my prayer
To heaven's immensity,
Where Anthea, precious Anthea,
Peeps out one star for me !

Thine, thine, all thine, the sleight,
The magic to dismiss
My Winter and black night
With one immortal kiss.
Sweet of the year, eye of the dawn,
Joy-bearer from afar—
O Anthea, darling Anthea,
My Spring ! My Morning Star !

HOPE

No heart yet broke for sorrow of another ;
No heart yet quailed before another's fears ;
No man yet born may understand his brother,
Nor taste the bitter of his sister's tears.
So keep we sane, through limits of our feeling
And little power to give or comprehend ;
But floods of deeper sympathy are stealing
Into man's spirit : this is not the end.
Reason foretells a fellowship supernal
To knit the great unborn in golden ties ;
For love's undying, and from love eternal
Compassion moulds our children's destinies.

RED CAPS

How glowing are their caps,
Where they nod and gleam together ;
How many are the bars that hold them prisoners.
Scarlet caps of " Liberty " nodding together, plotting
together
Behind golden bars, where no liberty can be !
Communists perhaps, or Anarchists ?
Bolshevists, or Nihilists ?
But all safe behind a myriad bars of pure gold.
Wrong again ! We are altogether mistaken.
Now that I put on my glasses,
I am only looking at the poppies in a field of ripe wheat—
Red poppies nodding and plotting together
Behind the golden bars of the corn.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

No wildings of the paw and wing
Outstay their time ; in nature's plan
Old age exists not : only man
Discovered that fantastic thing.

We plot that we may cheat the tomb
And baffle progress till five score ;
Though hunters wild, who hunt no more,
Drop out and vanish and make room.

When will and wits and worth are past,
Though on the scene we dawdle yet,
Our graves no honest tears will wet,
Our end few faces overcast.

Yet me, for one, such rhetoric
Shall not deter, or put to flight.
I'll cling to life with all my might
And stop as long as I can stick.

THE HOUSES

FORLORN and glum the couples go,
While Capital and Labour fight.
For lack of homes they can't unite
And love says "Yes," the builders, "No."

Yet, troubling not for time nor rest,
The courting rooks be flying thick,
And not a beak wi'out a stick
And not an elm wi'out a nest.

It do cast down my ancient mind
How senseless fowls can run their show,
Marry and help their childer grow,
And not us clever human kind.

Lords of creation we may be,
Though what the mischief we creates
But trouble, taxes, higher rates,
Be damned to us if I can see.

TO DEMETER

O TITAN Mother, thine the task be now,
While evening lights the furrows, where they wend,
To hold a mighty hand upon the plough
And drive the coulter steady to the end.

So in the heaven-wide arable of Time,
A glorious zone the blest unborn shall see,
That thou hast broken for the fruit sublime
Of the new harvest and new husbandry.

O weary Mother, one last furrow cries
The long day's work to crown, the crown to bless :
That furrow of the Nations' destinies,
Cleaving a way through love to righteousness.

FINIS

WHEN sun has set behind the hill
And comes the eternal dark to me,
Do thus, out of your charity
And fellowship and dear good will.

First fire the time-worn clay and lime,
Then on this heath the ashes cast,
So that they crumble up at last
Under the fingers of the thyme.

There leave them without more ado
For fair calluna to enfold ;
They'll turn one tormentil more gold,
One milkwort stain a deeper blue.

And if you mark that antre lone,
Where hills toward the sunrise turn
On high above a little burn,
Heave up the nearest granite stone.

But see that unwrought rock of mine
Be lifted so that it may bring
Rest for the roving falcon's wing
And comfort to the wandering kine.

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